

## I INTRODUCTION: AN UNEXPECTED WAR INTERRUPTS A WIDER PEACE, CATCHING SOLDIERS AND JOURNALISTS BY SURPRISE

The world at large was still enthusiastically congratulating itself on the swift, unplanned and relatively bloodless end of the Cold War when, on 2 August 1990, the army of Iraq invaded its rich but tiny neighbour, Kuwait. The entire territory of the kingdom was quickly occupied by the forces controlled by Iraq's President Saddam Hussein, who had only recently concluded a costly nine-year war against Iran, which Iraq lost.

Although experts were aware of a difficult border dispute between the ill-matched neighbours, the attack was unexpected. It caught the whole world by surprise, as so often happens, in the European, Middle Eastern, North American holiday season, when the captains and the kings, as well as other folk, generally vacate their homes and offices for travel or relaxation elsewhere.

The newspapers and broadcast media of the Western world were caught as unprepared for the crisis as were the political leaders, diplomats and soldiers. For all of them, in their different spheres, the challenge was to deal with a crisis that posed a threat to the oil supplies of many countries, as well as to the new and unfamiliar power balance in a world where one of the two superpowers had in effect abdicated that status. What President George Bush grandly called The New World Order faced its first serious test.

The two-day seminar that is the subject of this report was not about the Persian Gulf War itself -- or the Second Gulf War, as the presiding officer, Bernard Wood, said it should be called, counting the war of the 1980s between Iraq and Iran as the first one. Rather, the seminar was arranged to consider the role of the media in international conflict in general, but with special reference to this short, decisive war that is still fresh in all our minds. Because the great majority of reporters assigned to this story from all over the world were cooped up, coddled, controlled and confined by direction of American military and political news managers, there are now guilty feelings and sometimes angry self-reproach among journalists who feel they somehow failed the public and themselves. There is much dispute about how the war was waged by the United States (in fact) and by the United Nations (in principle); there is little dispute that the role of the Western